

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A surgical sling assembly for implanting in tissue to provide anatomical support in a patient, comprising:
a sling; and
a biocompatible ~~sleeve having a lumen,~~ casing enclosing at least a portion of the sling, ~~being positioned within the lumen, and~~ the biocompatible casing comprising a bioabsorbable material,
wherein the biocompatible casing is not a coating, and
wherein the biocompatible ~~sleeve~~ casing is absorbed by the patient's tissues after the surgical sling assembly is positioned within the patient's tissue to provide anatomical support.
- 2-3. (cancelled)
4. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises an alginate.
5. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises a sugar based formulation.
6. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises a starch.
7. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises a gelatin.
8. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises cellulose.
9. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises polyvinyl alcohol.

10. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises polyglycolic acid.
11. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises polylactic acid.
12. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises polydioxinone.
13. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises a lubricious material.
14. (previously presented) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the surgical sling assembly is adapted for positioning within a patient's periurethral tissues to treat urinary incontinence.
15. (currently amended) The sling assembly of claim 14, wherein the biocompatible sleeve casing is absorbed by the patient's tissues in less than ten minutes after the surgical sling assembly is positioned within the patient's periurethral tissues.
16. (currently amended) The sling assembly of claim 15, wherein the biocompatible sleeve casing is absorbed by the patient's tissues in eight to ten minutes after the surgical sling assembly is positioned within the patient's periurethral tissues.
17. (currently amended) A method for providing anatomical support in a patient, comprising:
providing a surgical sling assembly, comprising:
a sling; and
a biocompatible ~~sleeve having a lumen,~~ casing enclosing at least a portion of the sling, ~~being positioned within the lumen, and~~ the biocompatible casing comprising a
bioabsorbable material,
wherein the biocompatible casing is not a coating, and

wherein the biocompatible ~~sleeve~~ casing is absorbed by the patient's tissues after the surgical sling assembly is positioned within the patient's tissue to provide anatomical support; and
positioning the sling within the patient's tissue to provide anatomical support in the patient.

18. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein positioning the sling comprises positioning the sling within a patient's periurethral tissues to treat urinary incontinence.
19. (new) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the biocompatible casing comprises a sleeve.
20. (new) The sling assembly of claim 19, wherein the sleeve is a flattened tube.
21. (new) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the sling comprises one or more tanged portions.
22. (new) The sling assembly of claim 21, wherein the sling comprises two tanged end portions.
23. (new) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the sling comprises a de-tanged portion.
24. (new) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the sling comprises a de-tanged mid-length portion.
25. (new) The sling assembly of claim 1, further comprising one or more guide tubes located at one or more ends of the sling assembly.
26. (new) The sling assembly of claim 1, further comprising a delivery apparatus comprising:
a handle, and
a cannula.
27. (new) A surgical sling assembly for implanting in tissue to provide anatomical support in a patient, comprising:

a sling; and
a biocompatible sleeve comprising a bioabsorbable material,
wherein the sling is at least partially movable with respect to the sleeve, and
wherein the biocompatible sleeve is absorbed by the patient's tissues after the surgical sling
assembly is positioned within the patient's tissue to provide anatomical support.